Claims

1   1.   A method of sharing a video segment over a computer network, the network comprising a

2   receiving computer and a plurality of other computers including a destination computer, the

3   method comprising the steps of:

4   (a) receiving at the receiving computer the video segment sent over the computer

5   network from one of the plurality of other computers;

6   (b) performing automatically at the receiving computer, in response to a command

7   received over the network, the steps of:

8   (b1)   assuring that the video segment is in a streaming video format;

9   (b2)   creating at least an identification tag for the video segment to identify the

10   video segment;

11   (b3)   storing the video segment under the control of the receiving computer in the

12   streaming video format; and

13   (b4)   returning the identification tag to the one of the plurality of other computers;

14   (c) receiving the identification tag at the receiving computer; and

15   (d) in response to the receipt of the identification tag at the receiving computer, streaming

16   the video segment in the streaming video format over the network to the destination

17   computer.

1   2.   The method of claim 1, further comprising causing the video segment to be displayed at

2   the destination computer.

1   3.   The method of claim 1, wherein the video segment comprises an image with associated

2   audio information.

1   4.   The method of claim 1, wherein the video segment comprises a still image.

1   5   The method of claim 1, wherein the computer network comprises a wire connection.

1   6   The method of claim 1, wherein the computer network comprises a cellular

2   communication connection.

1   7   The method of claim 1, wherein the computer network comprises a wireless networking

2   connection.

1   8.   The method of claim 1, wherein the computer network comprises a terrestrial satellite

2   communication connection.

1   9.   The method of claim 1, wherein step (a) comprises receiving the video segment which

2   includes an identifier.

1   10.   The method of claim 8, wherein the identifier comprises a selected one of an image, a file

2   handle, a storage location, an address, a Universal Resource Locator (URL), a file name, an

3   interactive control, and a control object operating according to the Component Object Model

4   (COM).

1   11.   The method of claim 1, wherein step (a) comprises receiving the video segment which is

2   sent in association with an electronic mail message.

1   12.   The method of claim 1, wherein step (a) comprises receiving the video segment which is

2   sent in association with a HyperText Markup Language (HTML) mail message.

1   13.   The method of claim 1, wherein step (a) comprises receiving the video segment which is

2   sent in association with an upload form residing on a World Wide Web (Web) page

1   14.   The method of claim 1, wherein step (a) comprises receiving the video segment which is

2   sent in association with a File Transfer Protocol (FTP) transfer.

1   15.   The method of claim 1, wherein step (a) comprises receiving the video segment which

2   includes information supplied by a sender at the one of the plurality of other computers.

1   16.   The method of claim 15, where the information comprises information describing a

2   streaming format into which the receiving computer converts the video segment.

1   17.   The method of claim 15, wherein the information comprises an identification of the

2   sender.

1   18.   The method of claim 17, wherein the identification of the sender comprises a proper

2   name.

1   19.   The method of claim 17, wherein the identification of the sender comprises a username.

1   20.   The method of claim 17, wherein the identification of the sender comprises a password.

1   21.   The method of claim 15, wherein the information comprises a return address of the

2   sender.

1   22.   The method of claim 21, wherein the return address comprises an e-mail address.

1   23.   The method of claim 15, wherein the information comprises an identifier of the video

2   segment.

1   24.   The method of claim 23, wherein the identifier comprises a title.

1   25.   The method of claim 23, wherein the identifier comprises a name.

1   26.   The method of claim 23, wherein the identifier comprises a date the video segment was

2   produced.

1   27.   The method of claim 23, wherein the identifier comprises a location relating to the video

2   segment.

1   28.   The method of claim 23, wherein the identifier comprises a subject relating to the video

2   segment.

1   29.   The method of claim 15, wherein the information comprises a comment about the video

2   segment.

1   30.   The method of claim 15, wherein the information comprises a period of time during

2   which the video segment will be available.

1   31.   The method of claim 15, wherein the information comprises information relating to a

2   priority order of processing a video segment by the receiving computer.

1   32.   The method of claim 15, wherein the information comprises an instruction for transmittal

2   of a response.

1   33.   The method of claim 32, wherein the instruction comprises a formatting instruction.

1   34.   The method of claim 32, wherein the instruction comprises a speed of transmission.

1   35.   The method of claim 32, wherein the instruction comprises a transmission protocol to be

2   used.

1   36.   The method of claim 32, wherein the instruction comprises a format of a physical

2   medium to be used in sending a physical machine-readable copy of the video segment.

1   37.   The method of claim 32, wherein the instruction comprises a resolution of the video

2   segment.

1   38.   The method of claim 32, wherein the instruction comprises an image quality of the video

2   segment.

1   39.   The method of claim 32, wherein the instruction comprises a display format of the video

2   segment on a destination computer.

1   40.   The method of claim 15, wherein the information comprises financial information.

1   41.   The method of claim 40, wherein the financial information comprises a credit card

2   number.

1   42.   The method of claim 40, wherein the financial information comprises a financial account

2   identifier.

1   43.   The method of claim 1, wherein step (b1) comprises converting the video segment, if it is

2   not in a streaming video format at the time of receipt by the receiving computer, to a streaming

3   video format, independent of a received command to perform such conversion.

1   44.   The method of claim 43, wherein step (b1) comprises automatically converting the video

2   segment from a first streaming video format characteristic of the video segment upon receipt at

3   the receiving computer to a second streaming video format.

1   45.   The method of claim 1, further comprising queuing a second video segment and a

2   command transmitted with the second video segment for processing by the receiving computer

3   according to steps (b) through (d) in the event that the receiving computer is performing any of

4   steps (b) through (d) in response to receipt of a first video segment.

1   46.   The method of claim 1, further comprising providing to a sender of a video segment an

2   estimate of a duration of the required processing time for the conversion of the video segment.

1   47.   The method of claim 46, wherein the estimate is provided prior to performing any of

2   steps (b) through (d).

1   48.   The method of claim 1, further comprising providing to the destination computer of a

2   video segment an estimate of a duration of the required processing time for the conversion of the

3   video segment.

1   49.   The method of claim 1, wherein the video segment is converted into multiple video

2   formats.

1   50.   The method of claim 49, wherein the receiving computer streams the video segment in a

2   format of the available streaming video formats, the format based on a selected one of the

3   receiving computer responding to user settings at the destination computer, the receiving

4   computer responding to display software installed on the destination computer, the receiving

5   computer responding to information received in association with the receipt of the identification

6   tag, and the receiving computer determining an optimal viewing format for the destination

7   computer of the formats available.

1   51.   The method of claim 50, wherein the receiving computer sends to the destination

2   computer a video segment that is not in streaming format prior to the display of the video

3   segment.

1   52.   The method of claim 49, wherein the multiple video formats comprise a format not

2   compatible with streaming video.

1   53.   The method of claim 1, wherein the identification tag received by the destination

2   computer is communicated by the receiving computer in association with one of an electronic

3   mail message, an HTML electronic mail message, and an instant message.

1   54.   The method of claim 53, wherein the identification tag is a hyperlink provided in the

2   message sent to the destination computer, the hyperlink pointing to a Web page that causes the

3   streaming of the video.

1   55.   The method of claim 1, wherein the video segment in streaming video format is streamed

2   from the receiving computer as information embedded in a message.

1   56.   The method claim 1, wherein, in response to the receipt of the identification tag at the

2   receiving computer, the video segment in a first streaming video format is converted into a video

3   segment in a second streaming format by the receiving computer, and the video segment in the

4   second video format is streamed to the destination computer.

1   57.   A computerized system for sharing a video over a computer network, comprising:

2   a receiving computer for communicating with one or more other computers over a

3   computer network including a destination computer, the receiving computer receiving a video

4   segment from at least one of the one or more other computers, the receiving computer responsive

5   to a communication from the one or more other computers that can activate the receiving

6   computer automatically, the receiving computer comprising:

7   (i)   a control module that controls a memory, the memory capable of holding

8   computer instructions and data;

9   (ii)   a receiving module that receives a message associated with the video segment sent

10   from the at least one of the one or more other computers;

11   (iii)   an analyzer module that determines whether the video segment is in a streaming

12   video format;

13   (iv)   a format conversion module that converts a format of the video segment to a

14   format that is compatible with streaming video;

15   (v)   a storage module that stores the video segment in streaming video format in the

16   memory module;

17   (vi)   an identification module that creates the identification tag identifying the video

18   segment in streaming video format stored in the memory module;

19   (vii)   a transmitter module that transmits over the network the identification tag to a

20   computer of the one or more other computers; and

21   (viii)   a sharing module that streams the video segment in streaming video format to the

22   destination computer in response to a return of the identification tag to the receiving computer.

1   58.   The system of claim 57, further comprising an extraction module that extracts from the

2   received message the video segment and information sent with the video segment.

1   59.   The system of claim 58, wherein the information sent with the video segment comprises

2   an identity of the user of the computer of the one or more other computers.

1   60   .The system of claim 58, wherein the information sent with the video segment comprises

2   a return address of the user of the computer of the one or more other computers.

1   61.   The system of claim 58, wherein the information sent with the video segment comprises a

2   title of the video segment.

1   62.   The system of claim 58, wherein the information sent with the video segment comprises

2   an identifier of the video segment.

1   63.   The system of claim 58, wherein the information sent with the video segment comprises a

2   subject of the video segment.

1   64.   The system of claim 58, wherein the information sent with the video segment comprises a

2   date of creation of the video segment.

1   65.   The system of claim 58, wherein the information sent with the video segment comprises a

2   description of the video segment.

1   66.   The system of claim 57, wherein the analyzer module that determines whether the video

2   segment is in a streaming video format determines if the video segment is in QuickTime format.

1   67.   The system of claim 57, wherein the analyzer module that determines whether the video

2   segment is in a streaming video format determines if the video segment is in ASF format.

1   68.   The system of claim 57, wherein the analyzer module that determines whether the video

2   segment is in a streaming video format determines if the video segment is in WMF format.

1   69.   The system of claim 57, wherein the analyzer module that determines whether the video

2   segment is in a streaming video format determines if the video segment is in MPEG format.

1   70.   The system of claim 57, wherein the format conversion module that converts a format of

2   a video segment to a format that is compatible with streaming video comprises a format

3   conversion module that creates a DirectShow filter graph that decompresses the video file into an

4   uncompressed AVI format file.

1   71.   The system of claim 57, wherein the identification module that creates the identification

2   tag identifying the video segment in streaming video format stored in the memory module

3   comprises a module that selects a video frame from the video segment in streaming video format.

1   72.   The system of claim 57, wherein the identification module that creates the identification

2   tag identifying the video segment in streaming video format stored in the memory module

3   comprises a module that identifies a location where the video segment is stored.

1   73.   The system of claim 57, wherein the identification module that creates the identification

2   tag identifying the video segment in streaming video format stored in the memory module

3   comprises a module that identifies how the video segment can be accessed.

1   74.   The system of claim 57, wherein the identification module that creates the identification

2   tag identifying the video segment in streaming video format stored in the memory module

3   comprises a module that provides an image that represents the subject matter of the video

4   segment.

1   75.   The system of claim 57, wherein the identification module that creates the identification

2   tag identifying the video segment in streaming video format stored in the memory module

3   comprises a module that generates a file name.

1   76.   The system of claim 57, wherein the transmitter module that transmits over the network

2   the identification tag to at least one computer of the one or more other computers comprises a

3   module that transmits the identification tag using an electronic mail message communication

4   protocol.

1   77.   The system of claim 57, wherein the transmitter module that transmits over the network

2   the identification tag to at least one computer of the one or more other computers comprises a

3   module that transmits the identification tag using a HyperText Markup Language (HTML) mail

4   message communication protocol.

1   78.   The system of claim 57, wherein the transmitter module that transmits over the network

2   the identification tag to at least one computer of the one or more other computers comprises a

3   module that transmits the identification tag using an upload form residing on a World Wide Web

4   (Web) page.

1   79.   The system of claim 57, wherein the transmitter module that transmits over the network

2   the identification tag to at least one computer of the one or more other computers comprises a

3   module that transmits the identification tag using a File Transfer Protocol (FTP) transfer.

1   80.   The system of claim 57, wherein the sharing module that streams the video segment in

2   streaming video format to one computer of the one or more other computers in response to a

3   return of the identification tag comprises a module that streams the video segment to a specified

4   computer.

1   81.   The system of claim 57, wherein the sharing module that streams the video segment in

2   streaming video format to one computer of the one or more other computers in response to a

3   return of the identification tag comprises a module that streams the video segment at a selected

4   bitrate.

1   82.   The system of claim 57, wherein the sharing module that streams the video segment in

2   streaming video format to one computer of the one or more other computers in response to a

3   return of the identification tag comprises a module that streams the video segment at a selected

4   transmission quality.

1   83.   The system of claim 57, wherein the sharing module that streams the video segment in

2   streaming video format to one computer of the one or more other computers in response to a

3   return of the identification tag comprises a module that streams the video segment at a selected

4   performance level.

1   84.   The system of claim 57, wherein the sharing module that streams the video segment in

2   streaming video format to one computer of the one or more other computers in response to a

3   return of the identification tag comprises a module that streams the video segment in a selected

4   format.